

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PDEV MORG BF

SUBJ: PRIME MINISTER EXPOUNDS ON DEFENSE FORCE PLANS

REF: A. NASSAU 1909 B. NASSAU 1830

1. BEFORE AN AUDIENCE OF LOCAL JOURNALISTS ON THE MONTHLY "CONTACT" RADIO PROGRAM NOV. 10, PRIME MINISTER PINDLING EXPOUNDED ON EARLIER PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS ABOUT THE PLANNED BAHAMAS DEFENSE FORCE, SAYING THE GCOB HOPES TO GET STARTED ON IT "AS EARLY IN 1976 AS POSSIBLE." HE NOTED THAT THE GCOB IS RECEIVING ADVICE FROM THE UK ON THE MATTER AND DID NOT MAKE ANY DIRECT LINKAGES BETWEEN THE FINANCING OF THE FORCE AND THE NEGOTIATIONS OVER U.S. FACILITIES IN THE BAHAMAS.

2. WHILE CONCEDED THAT A DEFENSE FORCE CANNOT BE ORGANIZED "OVERNIGHT," PINDLING REPORTED THAT, AFTER ANALYSIS OF "EXPERT PROFESSIONAL ADVICE" BEING PROVIDED BY THE UK, THE GCOB "WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO SAY SOMETHING MORE DEFINITE ABOUT IT EARLY IN 1976. HE AGREED WITH QUESTIONERS THAT THE FORCE WOULD "UNDOUBTEDLY" BE VERY EXPENSIVE BUT CLAIMED THAT THE FULL COST WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE BORNE IMMEDIATELY. "THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE," HE SAID, "A GRADUAL DEVELOPMENT OVER, SAY, A FIVE YEAR PERIOD*"

3. AS TO COMPOSITION, PINDLING ENVISAGED AS THE CORE OF THE FORCE "A COAST GUARD TYPE ORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD BE THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SUCCESSOR TO THE MARINE DIVISION OF THE POLICE FORCE." A

"LAND-BASED UNIT" AND FIXED WING AND HELICOPTER AIR UNITS WOULD BE GEARED TO SUPPORTING THE AFLOAT FORCE. PINDLING ALSO CLAIMED THAT THE DEFENSE FORCE WOULD BE ENTIRELY SEPARATE FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S PLANNED NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAM "WHICH IS NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINDING RECRUITS FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE." HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT "PART OF THE TRAINING IN THE NATIONAL SERVICE WOULD BE PARA-MILITARY IN NATURE." HE DID NOT ELABORATE ON THE FUTURE SIZE OF THE FORCE.

4. THE MEASURED NATURE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRESENTATION ON THE FORCE IS IN LINE WITH EARLIER INDICATIONS (REF A) OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE GCOB'S INTENTIONS ON THE MATTER. THE TYPE OF FORCE HE DESCRIBED WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE REALISTIC APPLICABILITY TO AREAS OF LEGITIMATE GCOB CONCERN: I.E. CONTROL OF ILLEGAL FISHING AND SMUGGLING IN ITS TERRITORIAL WATERS. TAYLOR

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